Accounting for British Muslim's educational attainment: gender differences and the impact of expectations

Abstract

This study compares the educational attainment of Muslim and Christian White-British boys and girls at the following junctions: KS2, KS3, GCSE, getting into universities and achieving a place at a Russell Group university. It utilises the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England LSYPE waves 1-6 with linked data from the National Pupil Database. The analysis shows that once we take the previous school performance into account, Muslim students seem to be performing as well as the majority group, even in attending Russell group universities. Muslim girls seem to now be outperforming Muslim boys, especially in relation to their school performance. Furthermore, parental expectations and students' own expectations play an important role in determining the attainment of students. The study concludes that the higher achievement of young Muslims may be strongly correlated with their own unusually high expectations of going to university; but a primary source of the latter is likely to be the parents' unusually high expectations, the messages they receive and the discipline in place in relation to school-work at home and their relationship with their parents and their parents' norms.

Introduction and Theoretical Orientation

Most studies on the education of Muslim young people in Britain have focussed primarily on South Asians and particularly on Pakistani and Bangladeshi women (Brah, 1993; Basit, 1997; Dwyer, 2000; Abbas, 2004; Bagguley and Hussain, 2014; Franceschelli and O'Brien, 2014). Whilst South Asian Muslims (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians) constitute about 60% of Muslims in Britain (Ali, 2015), most studies have neglected the other 40% of this population.[1] For example, about 8% of all Muslims in Britain consider themselves as white, 7% are Arabs, 10% are black, 7% other Asians and approximately 8% of mixed heritage and other ethnic backgrounds (Ali, 2015). Studies analysing the school performance (including GCSE results) of pupils of minority ethnic origin in Britain have found that Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils perform below the white group (Haque and Bell, 2001; Wilson et al., 2006). However, despite the lower performance of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils at the GCSE, and given their initial low social class, especially among the first generation, they manage to participate in higher education in larger proportions than majority group. This surprising outcome is attributed to within group strategies and capital (ethnic and Muslim capital) (Modood, 2004; Shah et al., 2010; Franceschelli and O'Brien, 2014). Yet, excluding a relative high proportion of the Muslim population in Britain (40%) limits our understanding of how Muslims as a whole perform in education. It also impedes our ability to make any general conclusion about how well or badly do Muslim students perform compared to their Christian White-British counterparts.

Unlike the shortage of research on Muslims in education, the literature on the performance of Muslims in the labour market is more developed. It suggests that Muslims face more penalties and disadvantages than any other group, especially in relation to the majority group of Christian White-British (Khattab, 2009; Heath and Martin, 2013; Khattab and Johnston, 2013; Cheung, 2014). Moreover, it has been pointed out that Muslim women are less advantaged than Muslim men (Cheung, 2014). Given what we know about the performance of Muslims in the British labour market, to what extent are Muslim young boys and girls disadvantaged compared to their British-White Christian counterparts? To what extent does the school performance of Muslim girls lag behind their male counterparts? To what extent does the impact of factors such as educational expectations of children and their parents and student's effort vary by religious affiliation?

This study focuses on the performance of Muslim boys and girls within the British educational system. We depart from the existing literature by including White, Black, Arab and Mixed Heritage Muslim students in addition to Pakistani and Bangladeshi students. The paper analyses the educational attainment of Muslim males and females at the following key junctions: KS2, KS3, GCSE, getting into universities and in particular into Russell Group universities (versus non-Russell Group universities). At each junction, a comparison with the majority (dominant) Christian White-British is performed. This enables us to assess the relative advantage or disadvantage of Muslims as a group in an era of increasing islamophobic discourse which treats Muslims as suspects, including in schools (Mirza, 2015; Sian, 2015). Using the Christian White-British group as our comparator ensures within-group homogeneity in terms of the ethno-religious background and reduces variations due to uncontrolled factors.

We particularly draw on two earlier strands of work. Firstly, we draw upon an analysis by one of us of the role of educational expectations in scholastic progress (Khattab, 2003; Khattab, 2005; Khattab, 2015). The focus on expectations rather than aspirations is due to our understanding that expectations are a better predictor of educational attainment because they are closely related to previous performance and the socioeconomic conditions experienced by individuals/students. According to Reynolds and Pemberton (2001), educational expectations and aspirations reflect a fundamental difference between what one wishes to achieve and what one realistically expects to achieve. Aspirations, as such, are abstract statements or values and beliefs regarding future plans (educational or/and employment plans) made by young people, i.e. the educational level a student wishes to achieve. While aspirations are regarded as idealistic values Marjoribanks (1997), expectations, and this the definition we use here, involve an element of assessment of the likelihood that an event, behaviour or an outcome will occur. In other words, educational expectations is a term depicting how students think they will perform in reality given their socio-economic background in addition to their past and current academic performance.

The second strand we draw on focuses on the role of significant others, especially parents. This includes the parents' educational level and socio-economic status but is focused on a form of social and cultural capital. We are not thinking here in terms of the parents' knowledge of the educational system or the ability and confidence to speak to teachers; nor of cultural enrichment in terms of dominant culture or high culture (cultural capital). Rather, in motivating the child/student through a relationship, norms and norms enforcement – what one of us has

conceptualised as 'ethnic capital' – to inculcate not just certain behaviours but a certain identity (Modood, 2004; Shah et al., 2010; Franceschelli and O'Brien, 2014). As our dataset does not enable us to explore this concept in anything like the requisite detail, we will use a limited number of proxies, especially, parental expectations about the students' future attainments and participation in higher education.

Gender and education among Muslims in Britain: reversing the gap

Up until the late 1990s, the gender gap in education among British Muslims was in favour of men. Muslim men aged 16-24 were overrepresented in full time education and were more likely to possess higher qualification than Muslim women (Khattab, 2009). During the same period, some studies also suggested that the education and career aspirations of Muslim men were higher than the aspirations of Muslim women (Archer, 2003). These gender differences have been attributed to cultural perceptions and practices in relation to the value of education for women (Archer, 2003), and most importantly on the risks, rather than the opportunities, higher education may bring with it. In the past, as argued by Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera (2010), the education of a son had greater symbolic currency than the education of a daughter. This is usually attributed to what many Muslim parents consider as possible negative effects of higher education on their daughters' behaviour or on marriage prospects of women (Basit, 1997; Ahmad, 2001; Ijaz and Abbas, 2010). In addition to the concerns some parents had that going to university would corrupt their daughters' behaviour, Ahmad (2001: 147) found that many are also concerned that obtaining higher education will mean delaying marriage, and with increasing age, marriage prospects would be limited further. This is likely to impose pressure on both parents and their daughters alike.

However, these studies do not suggest that Muslim parents were against their daughters going into higher education *per se*. Indeed, many parents do support and encourage their daughters to obtain higher education (Dale et al., 2002). Many parents also believe that education per se is equally important for boys and girls, and in some cases education has been considered as a 'safety net' which can provide women with vital source of independence if they are faced by economic troubles (Ahmad 2001, Ijaz and Abbas 2010: 318). The main issue was the fear of some parents that western education might contribute to the corruption of their daughters which in turn brings shame and dishonour to the family (Thapar-Bjorkert and Sanghera, 2010; Bagguley and Hussain, 2014). Some Muslim women have challenged these cultural perceptions, not by abandoning these perceptions and values altogether, but by assuming a strong Islamic identity which, paradoxically, is used as an empowering strategy through which

they were able to participate in the public sphere (obtaining higher education and employment) and negotiate traditional family practices such as arranged marriages (Dwyer, 2000; Brown, 2006). In a recent study, Franceschelli and O'Brien (2014) have used the term 'Islamic capital' to refer to how parents use Islamic values and norms as a source to transmit a sense of morality and to control un-Islamic practices. These values are also used by parents to foster high aspirations among the young generation, to discipline them towards school-work at home, shape the girls' relationship with their parents and their parents' norms. The gender-difference perspective of parents manifested itself in a discipline at home that, ironically, has helped girls to improve their educational outcomes at school. The parental discipline at home, which allows boys greater freedom to spend time out of the house, can lead to boys spending less time on academic homework and sometimes becoming part of an anti-academic peer sub-culture, while girls – after having carried out assigned domestic duties – are likely to devote more time to schoolwork (Shah et al, 2010: 1120-21).

Muslim women, especially those planning to become economically active after leaving school, understand that they are more likely to face labour market penalties due to widespread stereotypes and racism, perhaps more so than Muslim men (Tyrer and Ahmad, 2006). This can reinforce their determination to obtain higher education qualifications not only as good as those of the majority group but better (Dwyer and Shah, 2009; Shain, 2011) in order to not let the anticipated labour market discrimination prevent them from achieving a desired job (Dale et al., 2002). This positive perception of education, even if instrumental as with the case of Muslim boys (Archer, 2003), shared by Muslim parents and their children (Ahmad 2001) leads us to hypothesise that Muslim women will develop higher level of educational expectations than Muslim men and Christian men and women. This may mean that these women may outperform Muslim men in terms of qualifications and entry into higher education, and by doing so to have reversed the initial gender gap in theirfavour. In considering this phenomenon we must consider not just the question of a parentally derived capital but the students', including the Muslim women's selective and reflexive utilization of their upbringing (Bagguley and Hussain, 2014) and experience.

Data and Methodology

We use the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England LSYPE waves 1-6 with linked data from the NPD to compare the position of Muslims and Christian White-British in England

in relation to their school performance at KS2, KS3, GCSE, the likelihood of attending a university at ages 18-19 and getting into Russell Group universities. Because we use different waves for different analysis, the sample size varies between 8,343 in the analysis of the KS2, KS3 and GCSE results to 3,559 in the analysis of being at a university at the age of 18-19 and to 1,824 in analysing the likelihood of attending a Russell Group university. For all of the analyses in this paper, however, the sample size was large enough for a robust modelling when the category of Muslims is taken as a group. Breaking this category further down by ethnicity/nationality (e.g. Arabs, Bangladeshis, Black Africans and so on) results in small sample sizes. Furthermore, in the analysis we excluded non-White Christian students such as Black-Caribbean and Black-African because of their very different educational profile compared to White students (Wilson et al., 2006).

Dependent variables

Variable's name	**Age**	**Scale**	**Range**	**Mean**	**SD**
Key Stage 2	11	Average point score (fine grading) for contextual value added[2]	15-35	26.99	4.06
Key Stage 3	14	Average point score (fine grading) for contextual value added	15-53	33.82	6.65
GCSE	16	Number of GCSE exams in which students achieved grades A*-C	0-15	4.94	3.82
Attending a university at age 18-19	18-19	Binary	0-1		
Attending a Russell Group university	18-19	Binary	0-1		

When modelling each of the above dependent variable, expect for the analysis of KS2, we controlled for previous school performance. Including previous performance is important for three reasons: Firstly, Previous performance is an important predictor of present or future achievement (Caprara et al., 2006). Secondly, students' and parental expectations are highly correlated with students' previous performance (Hao and Bonstead-Bruns, 1998). In this case, controlling for previous educational performance provides a more accurate estimates. Thirdly, despite the initial underachievement of many minority students (especially during the first few years of their education), all of them make substantial progress relative to white students between the ages of 14 (KS3) and 16 (GCSE) (Wilson et al., 2006). While the final level of

educational attainment is relevant to the larger picture of educational inequalities, given that performance levels for individuals or groups are not always consistently in one direction, controlling for previous achievement enables us to offset the initial minority-majority gap.

Furthermore, the first three dependent variables are analysed using a mixed effect model. The analysis takes into account the school as a second level (random effect) in order to neutralise any autocorrelation bias between students attending the same school (Hox, 2002). However, the last two models (attending a university and being at a Russell group university) are standard one-level logistic model analyses. An initial analysis using the GENLINMIXED procedure in SPSS did not justify a mixed effect model as the estimates were similar to the estimates of the standard regression analysis. For the sake of simplicity, in this paper we report the results of the standard logistic analysis.

Independent variables

Gender: coded as 1 for male and 0 for female.

Religion: coded as 1 for Christians and 0 for Muslims.

Family composition: was coded into three categories: 1 if a child lives with both biological parents, 2 if a child lives with only one biological parent and one step parents, and 3 if a child lives with one single parent or no parents at all. The third category was used as the reference group.

Class background: was coded into 4 categories: 1. professional and managerial class, 2. intermediate class, 3. never worked or long-term unemployment and 4. routine and manual occupations (the reference group).

Cultural capital: is an index that was derived from activities such as learning a musical instrument, participating in community work, or reading for pleasure. The index has a mean of 2.37 and standard deviation of 0.39 and ranges between 1.25 and 4.38 with high scores indicating that a family is rich in cultural capital.

Parental expectations: measure was derived by asking parents how likely they think their child will ever go to university. The answers were coded into 1 very or fairly likely and 0 not likely.

Students' own expectations: were coded into a binary variable with 1 if a student believes that it is very or fairly likely that he or she will apply and get into university and 0 if otherwise.

Parental involvement: includes involvement in school life, paying for private classes in school subjects or supplementary subjects and parental supervision over homework. The variable was coded into three levels: low, medium and high as the reference group.

Students' effort: was measured by the number of evenings that students do homework during the week. The variable was then recoded into 1 if a students does homework at least three evenings a week and 0 if otherwise.

Findings

Descriptive analysis

The analysis starts by presenting the distribution of the study's main variables by gender and religion. Table 1, which presents analysis based on Labour Force Survey data 2010-2013, shows that whilst Muslim older men are more likely to be degree holders than their female counterparts, younger Muslim women are more likely to have degrees. This trend has been present amongst Christians White-British for some time: it is only amongst the over 50 year olds that men are more likely to have degrees, with women being equally likely amongst 35-49 year olds, and considerably more likely amongst those 34 years old and less. On the other hand, it is very new amongst Muslims, with women more likely than men to have degrees only in the 21-24 age bracket and not by very much. Nevertheless, that it has happened at all is quite remarkable when one considers that in 1990 and 1991 Pakistani and Bangladeshi men admitted to higher education outnumbered their female peers by more than two to one and more than three to one respectively (Modood, 1993). Even as recently as 2001, Muslim Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men aged 20-29 were more likely to be degree holders than their female counterparts by 10 percentage points, 6 percentage points and 8 percentage points respectively (Khattab, 2009).

It seems that there may be a larger phenomenon here which is also manifesting itself in employment. A number of studies have suggested that many Muslim young women are keen on pursuing higher education and getting into the labour market and have developed a strong Islamic identity in order to negotiate the local cultural and traditional practices that are perceived as a major obstacle (Dwyer, 2000; Brown, 2006). This would also suggest, as Ahmad (2001) has argued, that Muslim women are highly motivated, even more than the majority group which is very well demonstrated in the results about their future expectations in Table 3 as we will see below.

Table 2 shows that at KS2 and KS3 Christian White-British girls and boys have a higher average point score than Muslim girls and boys. Among both religious groups, girls seem to be doing slightly better than boys, especially at the GCSE level. Girls in general achieve better

GCSE results than boys, but with an average of only 4.98 A*-C grades, the position of Muslim boys is particularly weak: unlike the case of degrees they are much behind Christian boys (6.09 A*-C grades); who themselves are behind Muslim girls (6.46 A*-C grades), not to mention Christian girls (6.93 A*-C grades). Given that Muslim men above the age of 25 have rather high proportion of degree holders, why should they be in this comparatively weak position at GCSE? One possible explanation is that this Muslim women advantage is a new phenomenon, and in the next few years we will see this advantage shifting to age brackets other than 21-24. Another explanation, though not mutually exclusive, is that many Muslim women end up getting married as soon as they finish their school education (sometimes even before that), perhaps due to social pressure by their parents and extended family (Dale et al., 2002, Ijaz and Abbas, 2010).

Table 3 is particularly striking in bringing out the gender contrasts amongst Muslims. While Table 2 showed that Christian girls had the best academic profile at GCSE, it is Muslim girls that at ages 16-17 say they are likely to apply to university (86%); 51% had actually applied at ages 17-18 and 42% were actually studying at university at ages 18-19. At each step this was much higher than Christian women (65%, 45% and 37%) and Christian men (53%, 38% and 32%). This makes for striking contrasts but it is the contrast with Muslim men that is most interesting. Unlike the Christians, they are not much less likely to say they will likely apply to university (81%), confirming the appeal that university education has for minorities in Britain compared to the majority. Yet, in contrast to their female peers only 39% of Muslim men actually applied at ages 17-18 (perhaps because of disappointing exam results?) and only 31% are actually at university at ages 18-19 – which is 25% less than Muslim women and slightly below Christian men of that age despite Muslim men being more likely to be degree qualified than them amongst the under 50 year-olds. It is also intriguing to see how parents' expectations and the pupils' own expectations are closely related. For example, the parents of Muslim girls have the highest level of expectations that their daughters will go to university (87%), followed by the parents of Muslim boys (80%). The equivalent percentages for Christian parents are 64% for girls and 50% for boys.

Table 4 displays the most important reasons young people consider going to university. They can be grouped into two bands:

1. Leads to better employment (items 1-4). The majority of Muslim girls (59%) consider this reason as the most important one for going to university, followed by Muslim boys (48%), Christian White-British boys (47%) and last Christian White girls (43%).

2. Getting more qualified\learning (items 7-9). Over one third of Muslim boys and Christian White-British girls and boys (39%, 39% and 36% respectively) consider this to be the most important reason for going to university, while only 24% of Muslim girls among them consider this to be the most important reason.

Looked at in this way, we see that there is not an overall gender contrast; rather, Muslim girls stand out. They are the most employment minded, followed by Muslim boys and Christian White-British boys, whilst Christian White-British girls are least so. Conversely Muslim girls are least qualification minded, while Muslim boys and Christian White-British girls are most qualification-minded and Christian White-British boys only slightly less so. All groups place employment prospects above getting more qualified/learning but Muslim girls do so the most, indeed by 35%, whilst Christian White-British girls do so hardly at all (4%) and Christian White-British boys (11%) and Muslim boys (9%) are in the middle but much closer to Christian White-British girls. So, why do Muslim girls stand out in this remarkable way in relation to not just going to university but also in the reasons for going to university? Human capital and skills are amongst the most important factors predicting labour market participation amongst minority-group women (Bhopal, 1998; Read and Cohen, 2007; Salway, 2007). It provides better opportunities to access the labour market (for the case of women in Muslim countries see Spierings et al., 2010), improves women's position to negotiate their after-marriage economic activity (Dale et al., 2002) and reduces unemployment penalties (Khattab, 2002; Khattab and Johnston, 2013).

Multivariate analysis

Table 5 presents the predictors for students' school performance at KS2. The table includes two models; the first one (Model 1) without interactions and the second with interaction effect between gender and religion (Model 2). The tables shows a Christian advantage which is prominent in both models. The result of the interaction term of Male X Christian in Model 2 suggests that the poorer KS2 performance for males as compared to females holds for Muslims and Christians alike. Living with two biological parents seems to improve the performance relative to living with a single parent or no biological parents. Class and cultural capital operate in the expected direction. Both are positively and significantly associated with school performance.

Table 6 predicts school achievement at KS3 presenting 5 different models. In Model 4 we repeat the analysis of Model 3 but for Christians only and in Model 5 for Muslims only. The

advantage of Christians is significant in the first two models (Models 1 and 2), but when previous performance (KS2) is controlled for, this advantage disappears in Model 3, suggesting that between the two stages (KS2 and KS3), Muslims do not experience further penalties or disadvantages additionally to the initial gap found in KS2. As expected, previous performance has a positive and significant impact on the later performance. Notice that the impact is similar for both Christians and Muslims.

The gender gap among Christian seems to disappear, but now a significant gender gap in favour of girls emerges among Muslims. Family composition operate in the same manner as found in relation to KS2, but for Christians only. This factor does not have any significant influence among Muslims. While Class seem to have a similar impact among both Christians and Muslims, cultural capital is significant only among Christians. Parental expectations and students own expectations measured at age 13-14 have a positive impact on school performance at KS3 among both groups. While students' effort measured at age 13-14 seems to be positively associated with school performance at the KS3 level among Christian and Muslim students alike, parental involvement is negatively associated with performance, but the impact is significant among Christians only.

Table 7 predicts the school performance at the GCSE level. The most interesting result in this table is the difference between Christians and Muslims shown in Model 3 which controls for previous performance (KS3). The table shows that at the GCSE level, the Christian advantage found in relation to KS2 not only disappears, as it did in relation to the performance in KS3, but has now shifted in favour of Muslims. This suggests that Muslims have progressed at a faster pace than Christians. Moreover, there is a significant gender difference in favour of girls among both Christians and Muslims, but it is greater in relation to the latter. While the impact of family composition, class and cultural capital is similar to that found in relation to KS3, the table shows that parental expectation is only significant for Christian students. However, students own expectations have a positive and significant impact among Christians and Muslims, but it is greater for the former.

The table also shows that students' effort measured at age 13-14 is positively associated with performance at the GCSE level among Christians and Muslims alike, parental involvement at the GCSE level is positively associated with performance, especially among Christians when previous performance (KS3) is taken into account in Model 3.

Table 8 predicts the likelihood of being at a university at the age of 18-19. Muslim males are less likely than Muslim females to be at a university at this age, and Christians are less likely than Muslims, but these results are not statistically significant. As expected, pervious performance at the GCSE has a strong and a positive impact on the likelihood of being at a university at the age of 18-19. Among Christians, both parental expectations and students own expectations are very important determinants, but among Muslims, students expectations measured at the age of 15-16 is by far the most important predictor. In fact, the coefficient in the model for Muslims (Model 5) is about 5 times bigger than the coefficient in the model for Christians (15.38 and 3.84 respectively).

Table 9 predicts the likelihood of being at a Russell Group university. The table shows that students with a professional and managerial class background are more advantaged than students with manual class background. Moreover, previous performance at the GCSE level is, equally unsurprisingly, a strong positive predictor. While there is a significant gender difference in favour of males among Christians, it seems that Muslim boys and girls have similar chances of getting into a Russell group university. In relation to the ethnoreligious gap, the table shows that there seem to be no significant difference between Christians and Muslims in getting into a Russell group university.

Concluding remarks

On the basis of the analysis presented in this paper, we make three substantial observations. First, once we take the previous school performance into account, Muslim students seem to be performing as well as the majority group, even in attending Russell Group universities. At the GCSE level, there was a clear advantage among Muslims. Muslim students make progress at these later stages relative to those with the same scores at an earlier level; they do better than one would have predicted on the basis of previous scores. This does not mean that Muslim students are doing better than say Christian-White British, nevertheless this finding is striking given the well-established educational disadvantages among some Muslim ethnic groups, most notably Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (Modood, 2003; Rothon, 2007). Of course, we should treat these results with some caution as further analysis using a larger sample or even the entire cohort is required.

Second, Muslim girls seem to now be outperforming Muslim boys, especially in relation to their school performance. This is a very interesting and new finding, especially given what we know about the gender gap among Muslims, not only in education but also in the labour market (Modood et al., 1997; Khattab, 2009). It is possible that Muslim women who are British born, unlike their mothers, have undergone a cultural transformation. On the one hand, many are more likely to assume a strong Islamic identity, which assists them to overcome local and family barriers in relation to their life choices and future plans. On the other hand, they understand that they are likely and perhaps more so than Muslim men to face labour market discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds. For them, obtaining better qualifications than the majority group is a way they can compete with them in the labour market (Dale et al., 2002, Tyrer and Ahmad, 2006). Thus, the gender difference among Muslims now follows the same pattern as among the majority group, and given that Muslims are closing the gender gap between them and majority group, it seems to us that there seems to be a convergence across ethnic groups in this respect, or that Muslims are assimilating into the UK educational cultural pattern. In order for us to confirm this conclusion, further analysis is required, especially when the data of Wave 8 (when the sample is at age 25-26) are released. This will enable us to examine whether the proportion of Muslim women who successfully graduate from universities is greater than Muslim men, and indeed greater than majority group of men and women.

Finally, parental expectations and students' own expectations play an important role in determining the attainment of students. However, the impact of parental expectations among majority group on school achievement and getting into universities was more significant than among Muslims. In fact, it wasn't significant among Muslims at all except for the achievement at KS3. This finding surprises us because we expected Muslim parents to have mobilised their children (boys and girls) through their high expectations, which has served here as a proxy of their ethnic or Islamic capital. The most likely explanation for this outcome is the consistent high parental expectations for the Muslims in the sample. There is almost no variation in this regard, which renders parental expectations a poor predictor of attainment and continuation for Muslim students, whilst displaying the ubiquity of this factor in the sample. It is also possible that as far as parents' expectations are concerned, the message that is being transmitted to the children is ambivalent, given the concerns many Muslim parents have in relation to possible negative impacts of western education, especially university education, on their daughters (Ahmad, 2001; Abbas, 2003; Ijaz and Abbas, 2010). If this latter is a significant factor, then

perhaps the "ethnic'' or "Islamic" capital argument has to be best understood as having a gendered aspect.

However, unlike parents' expectations, the impact of students own expectations on getting into higher education was substantially greater among Muslims than among the majority group. This suggests that the motivation among Muslim students (men and women alike) to obtain higher education is very high and the most influential factor. This seems to lend support to previous studies (Dale et al., 2002) arguing that most Muslim young people believe that obtaining higher qualifications is the best way to achieve successful labour market integration, but the same outcome could also be produced as a result of 'immigrant optimism' and the mechanisms of ethnic or Islamic capital (Modood, 2004; Franceschelli and O'Brien, 2014; Fernández-Reino, 2016).

So, in some ways British Muslim young people are converging on majority trends, especially in relation to closing the gender gap and its movement forward into a female advantage in educational attainment and participation in higher education. A source of this movement may well be the parental raising of higher expectation of participation in higher education amongst Muslim youth compared to the Christian White-British young people, but reservations about the possible 'westernising' influence of HE amongst some Muslim parents may lead to the result that having been more primed to perform academically at an earlier stage, Muslim youth are achieving through their own expectations their increased participation in HE. This is speculative but chimes with the suggestion that South Asian women are critically reflecting on their parents' norms and guidance. Bagguley and Hussain (2014) argue that '[t]he emergence and success of meta-reflexivity amongst young South Asian women in the UK is, we believe, one of the key factors behind the explanation of their increased participation in higher education, and can [better] incorporate the factors covered in theories of social and ethnic capital' (Bagguley and Hussain, 2014: p.53). This seems most plausible to us though we do not see it as necessary to create a binary here. Bagguley and Hussain present their argument by denying the inculcation of parent norms (Bagguley and Hussain: 2014, page 11) but can they really be denying that parents are trying to inculcate the relevant norms? Moreover, to the extent that parents do get their children to strive for academic achievement the inculcation seems to be working. Perhaps a less binary way of Bagguley and Hussain making their case is that inculcation leaves space for a meta-reflexivity which has emerged. They unnecessarily frame their useful point as providing an alternative self-sufficient explanation to social/ethnic

capital type explanations, but their argument only works if this larger claim is dropped and their contribution seen as complementary to and qualifying social capital type explanations. The higher achievement of young Muslims may be strongly correlated with their own unusually high expectations of going to university; but a primary source of the latter is likely to be the parents' unusually high expectations, the messages the children receive, the discipline in place in relation to school-work at home and the girls' relationship with their parents and their parents' norms.

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Table 1: Proportion of degree holders among each group by age, LFS 2010-2013

	Muslim women	Muslim men	CWB women	CWB men
21-24	25	22	27	18
25-34	30	39	36	27
35-49	23	30	25	25
50-65	12	21	14	18
N	4,275	4,106	65,622	53,950

Table 2: school achievement in KS2, KS3 and GCSE by group, LSYPE

	Muslim women	Muslim men	CWB women	CWB men
KS2 average point score for contextual value added.	25.55	25.15	27.76	27.52
KS3 average point score for contextual value added.	31.66	30.77	35.25	34.65
Total number of GCSE/GNVQ qualifications at grades A*-C	6.46	4.98	6.93	6.09
N	989	946	2,469	2,465

Table 3: expectations of applying to university and actual application and attendance and the expectations of parents (in %), LSYPE (2008-2010) (The numbers in brackets are the Ns)

	Muslim women	Muslim men	CWB women	CWB men
Likelihood* of applying to university (age 16-17)	86 (795)	81 (757)	65 (2,241)	53 2,165
Expectations of parents when YP is 16-17 that he/she will go to university*	87 (647)	80 (579)	64 (1,380)	50 (1,058)
Whether applied to university (age 17-18)	51 (732)	39 (694)	45 (2,111)	38 (1,997)
Currently studying at a university (age18-19)	42 (712)	31 (625)	37 (1,993)	32 (1,866)

* Very likely or fairly likely

Table 4: Most important reasons for going to university LSYPE (in %).

	Ethnoreligious and sex background variable			
	Muslim girls	Muslim boys	Christian-White Girls	Christian-White Boys
Will lead to a good/better job (than would get otherwise)	34	33	23	22
Will lead to a well paid job	4	6	3	8
Gives you better opportunities in life	6	7	7	8
Is essential for the career want to go into	15	2	10	9
Shows that you have certain skills	1	0	0	1
To delay entering work/ give me time to decide on a career	0	0	1	0
wanted to carry on learning/I am good at/interested in my ch	8	12	12	11
To get a degree (general/non-specific)	10	14	12	7
To get more qualification/higher/better qualifications	6	13	15	18
The social life/ lifestyle / meeting new people / it's fun	2	2	8	9
To leave home/ get away from the area	0	1	1	1
Makes you independent/ maturity / personal development / lea	2	2	2	1
People will respect me more	1	0	0	0
Was expected of me by my family/friends	0	1	1	0
To have a better life/good life (general)	4	4	0	1
Prepare you for life/gain life skills	1	0	0	0
Other	8	5	6	5
Total N	173	108	511	388

Table 5: A mixed effect model Predicting school achievement at Key Stage 2 (end of year 6, age 11) LSYPE N=8,343

Parameter	Model 1 - No interaction		Model 2 - With interaction	
	B	SE	*B*	SE
Intercept	27.87	0.32	27.85	0.33
Christians (base=Muslims)	1.14**	0.14	1.16**	0.17
Male (base-female)	-0.29**	0.09	-0.26	0.19
Family composition (base=single or no biological parents)				
Lives with two biological parents	0.54**	0.11	0.54**	0.11
Lives with one biological and one step parent	-0.24	0.17	-0.24	0.17
Parental Class (base=routine and manual occupations)				
Professional and managerial class	1.81**	0.11	1.81**	0.11
Intermediate class	0.89**	0.12	0.89**	0.12
Never worked or long-term unemployment	-0.53**	0.18	-0.53**	0.18
Cultural capital	1.24**	0.11	1.24**	0.11
Interaction: Male X Christian			-0.04	0.21
Residuals	11.95	0.21	11.95	0.21
Level-2 variance	2.5	0.22	2.5	0.22

Table 6: A mixed effect model Predicting school achievement at Key Stage 3 (end of year 9, age 14) LSYPE N=8,343

	Model 1 - Expectations		Model 2 - Effort		Model 3 - Previous performance		Model 4 - Christians only		Model 5 - Muslims only	
Parameter	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	30.25	0.51	26.27	0.55	-1.5	0.38	-1.45	0.41	-1.7	0.85
Male (base-female)	-0.42**	0.13	-0.13**	0.13	-0.15*	0.07	-0.07	0.08	-0.51*	0.18
Christians (base=Muslims)	2.60**	0.2	2.74**	0.2	0.17	0.22				
Family composition (base=single or no biological parents)										
Lives with two biological parents	1.26**	0.16	1.18**	0.16	0.48**	0.09	0.53**	0.09	0.24	0.23
Lives with one biological and one step parent	0.26	0.24	0.25	0.25	0.27*	0.14	0.29*	0.13	1.03	0.96
Parental Class (base= manual occupations)										
Professional and managerial class	2.25**	0.16	2.32**	0.16	0.87**	0.09	0.77**	0.1	1.26**	0.26
Intermediate class	1.42**	0.18	1.45**	0.17	0.64**	0.1	0.65**	0.11	0.56*	0.22
Never worked or long-term unemployment	-0.83**	0.26	-0.84**	0.27	-0.23	0.15	0.04	0.27	-0.43	0.23
Cultural capital	1.09**	0.17	0.86**	0.17	0.51**	0.1	0.68**	0.1	-0.21	0.24
Parents' expectations at age 13-14	4.21**	0.18	4.09**	0.18	1.07**	0.1	1.08**	0.1	0.91*	0.37
YP's expectations at age 13-14	2.02**	0.16	1.78**	0.17	0.59**	0.09	0.51**	0.1	0.79**	0.23
Parental involvement, base=high involvement										
Low involvement			1.70**	0.25	0.48**	0.14	0.40**	0.15	0.65	0.37
Medium involvement			0.83**	0.15	0.12	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.2	0.2
Student's effort at age 13-14, base=less than 3 times a week			1.55**	0.14	0.74**	0.08	0.72**	0.08	0.90**	0.19
Previous performance (KS2 results)					1.27**	0.01	1.29**	0.01	1.21**	0.02
Residuals	24.59	0.44	23.75	0.44	6.8	0.13	6.03	0.13	8.81	0.37
Level-2 variance	5.8	0.5	4.64	0.44	0.96	0.1	1.05	0.12	1.05	0.27
Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC)	43536.87		40067.43		30341.36		23097.14		7218.35	

Table 7: A mixed effect model Predicting the number of GCSEs level A*-C (end of year 11, age 16) LSYPE N=8,343

	Model 1 - Expectations		Model 2 - Effort		Model 3 - Previous performance		Model 4 - Christians only		Model 5 - Muslims only	
Parameter	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Intercept	2.07	0.3	1.16	0.32	-9.8	0.26	-10.08	0.28	-9.24	0.05
Male (base-female)	-0.50**	0.07	-0.41**	0.08	-0.48**	0.05	-0.39**	0.06	-0.78**	0.12
Christians (base=Muslims)	1.01**	0.12	1.04**	0.11	-0.26**	0.08				
Family composition (base=single or no biological parents)										
Lives with two biological parents	0.83**	0.09	0.76**	0.1	0.26**	0.07	0.34**	0.07	-0.02	0.15
Lives with one biological and one step parent	0.19	0.14	0.11	0.15	-0.05	0.1	0.01	0.1	0.08	0.15
Parental Class (base= manual occupations)										
Professional and managerial class	1.14**	0.1	1.18**	0.1	0.35**	0.07	0.32**	0.08	0.36*	0.17
Intermediate class	0.69**	0.1	0.75**	0.11	0.22**	0.07	0.27**	0.08	0.08	0.15
Never worked or long-term unemployment	-0.35*	0.16	-0.3	0.16	0.1	0.11	0.18	0.22	-0.11	0.16
Parents' expectations at age 13-14	1.74**	0.1	1.65**	0.11	0.20**	0.07	0.21**	0.08	-0.12	0.26
YP's expectations at age 15-16	2.84**	0.1	2.68**	0.1	1.18**	0.07	1.28**	0.08	0.78**	0.19
Cultural capital	0.73**	0.1	0.60**	0.1	0.23**	0.07	0.25**	0.08	-0.07	0.16
Parental involvement, base=high involvement										
Low involvement			0.51**	0.15	-0.23*	0.1	-0.29**	0.11	-0.03	0.25
Medium involvement			0.28**	0.09	0	0.06	-0.06	0.07	0.17	0.13
Student's effort at age 13-14, base=less than 3 times a week			0.95**	0.08	0.39**	0.06	0.42**	0.06	0.28*	0.13
Previous performance (KS3 results)					0.42**	0.01	0.42**	0.01	0.43**	0.13
Residuals	7.2	0.14	7.12	0.14	3.37	0.07	3.21	0.07	3.74	0.17
Level-2 variance	1.44	0.13	1.21	0.12	0.31	0.04	0.34	0.05	0.3	0.11
Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC)	30405.69		28152.57		23288.01		17930.26		5410.9	

Table 8: Logistic regression analysis of attending a university at the age of 18-19, LSYPE N=3,559

	Model 1 - Expectations		Model 2 - Effort		Model 3 - Previous performance		Model 4 - Christians only		Model 5 - Muslims only	
	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.
Male (base-female)	0.95	0.07	0.98	0.07	1.02	0.08	1.07	0.09	0.86	0.18
Christians (base=Muslims)	0.83	0.1	0.82	0.1	0.66	0.11				
Family composition (base=single or no biological parents)										
Lives with two biological parents	1.27*	0.1	1.26*	0.1	1.19	0.11	1.26	0.12	0.93	0.25
Lives with one biological and one step parent	0.96	0.17	1.03	0.17	1.03	0.18	1.08	0.19	0.56	0.95
Parental Class (base=routine and manual occupations)										
Professional and managerial class	1.60**	0.1	1.54**	0.1	1.23	0.11	1.25	0.13	1.15	0.25
Intermediate class	1.21	0.11	1.19	0.12	1.03	0.12	1.11	0.15	0.82	0.23
Never worked or long-term unemployment	0.86	0.18	0.8	0.19	0.79	0.19	0.75	0.42	0.67	0.25
Parents' expectations at age 15-16	4.06**	0.19	3.66**	0.2	3.10**	0.21	3.58**	0.22	1.49	0.7
YP's expectations at age 15-16	4.91**	0.21	5.30**	0.22	4.55**	0.22	3.84**	0.24	15.38**	0.78
Degree leads to better paid jobs (W4)	1.26	0.13	1.26	0.14	1.3	0.14	1.33	0.16	1.19	0.38
Cultural capital	0.78*	0.1	0.84	0.11	0.93	0.11	0.94	0.13	0.89	0.24
Parental involvement in school, base=high involvement										
Low involvement			0.91	0.15	0.85	0.16	0.82	0.17	0.94	0.36
Medium involvement			0.9	0.09	0.9	0.09	0.91	0.1	0.82	0.21
Student's effort at age 13-14, base=less than 3 times a week			1.39**	0.09	1.20*	0.09	1.22	0.1	1.13	0.21
Number of GCSEs at level A*-C					1.25**	0.02	1.23**	0.02	1.30**	0.04
Constant	-2.53		-2.82		-4.1		-4.53		-4.18	
Chi-square	723.56		709.91		842.24		719.44		117.9	
	P<0.01		P<0.01		P<0.01		P<0.01		P<0.015	
Cox & Snell R Square	0.18		0.18		0.22		0.23		0.16	

Table 9: Logistic regression analysis of attending a Russell group university at the age of 18-19, LSYPE N=1,824

	Model 1 - No interaction		Model 2 - With interaction	
	Exp(B)	S.E.	Exp(B)	S.E.
Male (base-female)	1.40**	0.12	0.98	0.29
Christians (base=Muslims)	0.93	0.17	0.77	0.22
Family composition (base=single or no biological parents)				
Lives with two biological parents	0.81	0.18	0.8	0.18
Lives with one biological and one step parent	0.79	0.3	0.79	0.3
Parental Class (base=routine and manual occupations)				
Professional and managerial class	1.85**	0.19	1.83**	0.19
Intermediate class	1.22	0.22	1.21	0.22
Never worked or long-term unemployment	0.78	0.41	0.74	0.41
Parents' expectations at age 15-16	4.13*	0.72	4.16*	0.73
YP's expectations at age 15-16	1.68	0.75	1.69	0.75
University degree leads to better paid jobs (W4)	0.7	0.24	0.69	0.24
Number of GCSEs at level A*-C	1.49**	0.04	1.49**	0.04
Cultural capital	0.82	0.18	0.84	0.18
Interaction: Male X Christian			1.54	0.32
Constant	0	0.93	0	0.93
Chi-square	p<0.01	DF= 12	p<0.01	DF= 13
Cox & Snell R Square	0.1		0.1	

[1] South Asians were of course a higher proportion of Muslims in Britain when most of these studies were undertaken.

[2] The contextual value added score for each student is the difference (positive or negative) between their own actual attainment and a predicted attainment based on a statistical model that takes into account a set of characteristics. For calculating the fine grades of the contextual value added scores, pupils achieving the minimum mark available for a level 4 are assigned 24.0 points, those at the mid-point between the level 4 and 5 thresholds 27.0 points and those who missed getting level 5 by one or two marks will be assigned a point score of around 29.9 and so on.
http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/archive/pilotks4_05/annex.shtml (accessed 5 November 2016).